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Fifty-first Session

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Friday, 25 October 1996, 10 a.m.
New York

President: Mr. Razali Ismail ..... (Malaysia)

In the absence of the President, Mr. Van Dunem "Mbinda" (Angola), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Agenda item 49

Question of the Falkland Islands (Malvinas)

The Acting President: I should like to inform representatives that, following consultations on this item, and taking into consideration General Assembly decision 50/406 of 31 October 1995, it is proposed that the General Assembly decide to postpone consideration of this item and to include it in the provisional agenda of its fifty-second session.

Mr. Dlamini (Swaziland): While my delegation has no wish to comment on the way the Acting President has guided us, I should like to voice our concern over the item before us, which has been persistently postponed without clearly stated reasons being given to the General Assembly.

If I may request the courtesy of the presidency on behalf of my delegation, I would suggest that reasons be given so that, as delegates representing Member States, we will be in a position to know what to report back to our Governments. During our last report we mentioned the same thing — that the issue had been postponed. Without clarification, however, this is frustrating for our participation, especially since the item was included by the General Committee in the agenda for the Assembly's consideration.

The Acting President: The General Assembly has taken note of the statement of the representative of Swaziland.

May I take it that the Assembly, taking into account decision 50/406, wishes to defer consideration of this item and to include it in the provisional agenda of its fifty-second session?

It was so decided.

The Acting President: The General Assembly has thus concluded its consideration of agenda item 49.

Agenda item 29

Cooperation between the United Nations and the Inter-Parliamentary Union

Report of the Secretary-General (A/51/402)

Draft resolution (A/51/L.6)

The Acting President: I call on the representative of Egypt to introduce draft resolution A/51/L.6.

Mr. Elaraby (Egypt) *(interpretation from Arabic)*: It is a pleasure for me to be the first speaker at this morning's meeting to address agenda item 29, entitled "Cooperation between the United Nations and the Inter-Parliamentary Union", and to introduce a draft resolution on behalf of the co-sponsors, whose number is steadily

96-86627 (E)

This record contains the original text of speeches delivered in English and interpretations of speeches delivered in the other languages. Corrections should be submitted to original speeches only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and be sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned, *within one month of the date of the meeting*, to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, Room C-178. Corrections will be issued after the end of the session in a consolidated corrigendum.

increasing. This draft resolution is contained in document A/51/L.6.

In commemorating the agreement reached and signed between the United Nations and the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) on 24 July 1996, the General Assembly today marks an important stage in its cooperation with international organizations. This is a very important step which the General Assembly mandated the Secretary-General to carry out in resolution 50/15 of 15 November 1995, in order to establish cooperation in all fields and to promote fundamental human rights and freedoms.

I can only thank the Secretary-General of the United Nations, Mr. Boutros Boutros-Ghali, and the Secretary-General of the IPU, Mr. Pierre Cornillon, for their joint efforts and for the efforts of their staff, which were crowned with the effective implementation of the clauses of this agreement between the two organizations.

The conclusion of this agreement is a cornerstone in the edifice of consolidating fruitful and beneficial cooperation between our two organizations. It lays the foundations for the formal framework for this cooperation, which should be promoted by expanding its scope and content. We are very pleased that this agreement has been reached. It is an agreement that provides for cooperation and consultation between the organizations as they discharge their mandates.

The participation of the United Nations in the various forums of the IPU is incontrovertible. In addition to their participation in the New York meeting convened to follow up the World Summit for Social Development and jointly organized by the IPU pursuant to the conclusion of the agreement that we are commemorating today, their participation was inaugurated by sending representatives of the Secretary-General to the ninety-fifth and ninety-sixth Inter-Parliamentary Conferences, held in Istanbul and Beijing. I should also mention the meetings that took place very recently between the two Secretaries-General and the policy makers of their secretariats.

All this opens the door to very promising prospects for cooperation which will further foster the lofty objectives and purposes of both organizations. We hope that this across-the-board cooperation in all fields will grow, so as to strengthen the capacity of the United Nations in achieving its purposes under the Charter. These purposes can be furthered through the support rendered by the IPU, which can also play an extremely important role in promoting international peace and cooperation.

I would like to conclude by expressing Egypt's gratitude to the current President of the IPU, who was the main architect in the development of this cooperation agreement between organizations that have similar missions and principles.

On behalf of the co-sponsors of the draft resolution set out in document A/51/L.6, and the countries that subsequently joined them, I would like to present the various provisions of this draft resolution to the General Assembly.

In the preambular part of the draft resolution, the General Assembly recalls that it requested the Secretary-General to conclude an agreement on cooperation between the United Nations and the IPU and stresses its desire to strengthen existing cooperation between the United Nations and the IPU and to give it a new and adequate framework.

In the operative portion of the draft resolution, the General Assembly welcomes the conclusion on 24 July 1996 of the cooperation agreement between the United Nations and the IPU, considers that the signature of the agreement constitutes an important step for increased and strengthened cooperation between the two organizations, decides to include in the provisional agenda of its fifty-second session the item entitled "Cooperation between the United Nations and the Inter-Parliamentary Union", and requests the Secretary-General to submit a report to it at its fifty-second session on various aspects of cooperation that have taken place between the United Nations and the IPU in implementation of the cooperation agreement.

In view of the procedural and ceremonial nature of the draft resolution, and given the lack of any financial programme implications, I would propose, on behalf of all the co-sponsors, that the General Assembly adopt it by consensus.

Mr. Yusof (Singapore): Since this is the first time that I am speaking here during this session, I would like to express my sincere congratulations to Mr. Razali Ismail on his election as President and to take this opportunity to express my delegation's satisfaction at the manner in which he has steered the course of the fifty-first session of the General Assembly thus far. I have no doubt that he will continue to acquit himself honourably and with his own exemplary personal style of the responsibilities thrust upon him. On a more personal note, it gives me great pleasure to see a friend of Singapore presiding over the Assembly. I would assure

him of the full support of the Singapore delegation and that he can call upon us for any assistance that he may require in the conduct of the affairs of the fifty-first session of the Assembly and throughout the term of his presidency.

Last year, on 15 November 1995, the General Assembly adopted by consensus resolution 50/15, "Cooperation between the United Nations and the Inter-Parliamentary Union". That resolution was introduced by Mr. Nabil Elaraby of the Arab Republic of Egypt and sponsored by no less than 62 Member States. Today, we have learned that the number of sponsors of this year's draft resolution has increased.

In adopting that resolution the Member States of the United Nations recognized that national parliamentarians, through the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), share common objectives with the United Nations and that the IPU can play a crucial role in promoting the work and goals of the Organization.

My delegation views it as timely that the IPU, with its membership of no less than 133 national Parliaments, should seek closer participation with the United Nations. The ties between the two organizations, particularly in the areas of peace, human rights and democracy, date back to the establishment of the United Nations itself. On the basis of the shared objectives of the United Nations and the IPU, closer cooperation can only facilitate the work of parliamentarians and empower the work of the United Nations.

The key to cooperation between the United Nations and the IPU is complementarity. The United Nations is not a world Government. After all, its mandates are determined and its resources furnished by its Member States. Yet the United Nations has successfully established international law and set international standards and programmes in almost every field of human conduct.

However, sovereign power remains with sovereign nation States. The members of the IPU decide for their respective nations whether to assume binding international obligations and how to implement, nationally, the decisions that States have taken at the international level.

The task of exercising sovereign power should, and rightly, be exercised only by the parliamentarians, that is, by men and women elected by the people of each nation, men and women who are in direct contact with the general population, who are in touch with their shared aspirations and who understand their common interests.

This goes back to the original purpose of the United Nations, for the Charter of the United Nations begins with the preambular words:

"We the peoples of the United Nations ...".

Increased participation and collaboration with the IPU would therefore make the United Nations more representative, as the Parliaments represent the will of the people of every nation.

My delegation is of the view that it is only through a gainful collaborative relationship between the United Nations and the IPU that the will of the people can be better expressed at the international level through the United Nations and that, conversely, through the IPU, the voice of the inter-governmental process can be disseminated at the grass-roots level. In effect, it is a win-win situation.

In preparing the United Nations for the twenty-first century, a fundamental issue that has to be resolved is the United Nations financial problem. It has been repeated time and again that the key reason for that problem is the failure of some Member States to pay their dues in full and on time.

One reason that has been offered for the inability of Member States to fulfil their financial obligations to the United Nations is that domestic political bodies do not support their current share of the United Nations budget.

It is therefore good for the United Nations to bring the parliamentarians on board. The active participation of parliamentarians is needed to relay and explain to the public the issues involved, which would be helpful in garnering popular support for international action. This would address the problem of justifying the resources needed for international cooperation.

My delegation has therefore noted with pleasure that the Secretary-General's report submitted pursuant to General Assembly resolution 50/15 informs us that a cooperation agreement between the United Nations and the IPU was signed on 24 July 1996. My delegation welcomes the conclusion of that agreement, which formalizes the framework for effective cooperation between the United Nations and the IPU.

The effectiveness of the cooperation agreement has already been evidenced by the fact that a list has been drawn up of the concrete steps and actions to be taken by

the members of the IPU as a follow-up to the implementation of the decisions and recommendations adopted at the World Summit for Social Development, which was held at Copenhagen in March 1995.

We are about to embark on a new century, one in which a borderless world will not be a mere catchphrase. As the representative of my Parliament to the Assembly, it is a personal pleasure for me to be here today to witness the formalization of the relationship between the United Nations and the IPU.

The formalization of this relationship reflects a reaffirmation of the IPU's belief that the United Nations and its organs are responsible for and capable of creating a better world for tomorrow. It is a reaffirmation of the belief that multilateral cooperation is a necessity and that it is in the self-interest of all States to resolve the challenges that threaten all humankind.

I am grateful to have been given this opportunity to express the view of the Republic of Singapore that formalization of the old, but tried and true, relationship between the IPU and the United Nations brings with it the hopes for the future of the peoples of the world: peace, justice, equality and the dignity of all humankind.

Mr. Pelufo (Uruguay) *(interpretation from Spanish)*: It is an honour for me to address this Assembly on agenda item 29, "Cooperation between the United Nations and the Inter-Parliamentary Union".

Permit me first to express my country's great interest in this matter. Uruguay has supported from the outset the inclusion of this item on the agendas both of the General Assembly and of the Inter-Parliamentary Union. We believe that two institutions as important as these in today's world cannot work alone or apart from their respective activities for peace, democracy, human rights and the development of peoples. On the contrary, they must join their efforts so that these purposes and goals may be achieved as quickly and efficiently as possible.

My delegation recognizes the contribution made by the Secretary-General in his report (A/51/402) and welcomes the results of the cooperation agreement signed by the United Nations and the Inter-Parliamentary Union on 24 July this year. The agreement strengthens relations between the two organizations and greatly facilitates activities complementary mutually and allows the organizations to cooperate more closely in joint efforts in specific areas of their activities for the benefit of mankind. We are convinced that the link that has been forged through this agreement will also make it possible for the world Organization of Governments and the world organization of parliaments to maintain substantive cooperation and in this way better express the will of peoples at the international level.

As a result of this agreement as well as through the political will displayed by many Governments and intergovernmental organizations, my delegation wishes to highlight the convening of a meeting on the follow-up activities to the World Summit for Social Development, with the purpose of expanding cooperation among Parliaments, Governments and intergovernmental organizations in order to implement effectively the results of the World Summit for Social Development.

The convening of this meeting on 5 and 6 September, as well as of others which may take place for the attainment of the same goals, will contribute to a better implementation of the principles and precepts of the United Nations Charter and of other instruments of international law and policy.

Bringing national parliaments closer is a way of reaching out to the ordinary citizen in order to achieve an exchange of ideas and contributions which would otherwise be difficult. The former Minister for Foreign Affairs of Uruguay and current President of the Inter-American Development Bank, Mr. Enrique Iglesias, stated years ago that

> "Parliament in this regard is key because it expresses the voices of the parties; and together with them public opinion, the media, and professional and technical circles are heard. In this way, one can articulate a highly unified foreign policy."

It is with this conviction that my country has a coherent foreign policy, where the major principles and themes that guide the conduct of our country abroad are shared by all actors in the national political arena. This, in my country's view, also takes place in a forum such as the Inter-Parliamentary Union, which expresses and deliberates the positions of the vast majority of the world's political forces.

At the regional and subregional levels, the parliamentary delegations of my country have followed and continue to follow with particular interest the treatment of items addressed by the Latin American

Parliament, which is presided over at present by a Uruguayan legislator. This matter has also been under consideration in MERCOSUR, the common market of the South, which through the Protocol of Ouro Preto, created as one of its bodies a joint parliamentary commission. This is the body which represents the parliaments of the member States of MERCOSUR.

Whenever the Inter-Parliamentary Union or the United Nations is involved, Uruguay has shown a total commitment to democracy as the way to govern the future of our peoples. As we maintain firmly that the United Nations should achieve innovative ways towards greater democratization of the system, Uruguay, which is a country with deep democratic convictions, is pleased that parliaments can make a contribution, convey their experiences and be one more voice in this concert of the peace and prosperity we all hope for.

Mr. Minoves-Triquell (Andorra) *(interpretation from French)*: The Principality of Andorra has inherited a parliamentary tradition going back more than five centuries. Indeed, the establishment of the *Consell de la Terra*, precursor of our present parliament, the *Consell General*, goes back to 1419. In accordance with this tradition and pursuant to the Constitution of 1993, my country administers its political system through a parliament similar to that of many other democracies. It is therefore natural and necessary for Andorra today to manifest its firmest support of the cooperation agreement signed last 24 July between the United Nations and the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU). As a sponsor of the draft resolution submitted to the General Assembly by Egypt, whom we would like to thank, my country hopes that this cooperation agreement will lead to specific projects and that next year when we again consider this agenda item, we will be able to commend the progress that has been made.

Barely a year ago, the Inter-Parliamentary Council of the Union, meeting in special session at United Nations Headquarters in New York, reaffirmed in its declaration on parliamentary prospects for international community on the eve of the twenty-first century the lofty vision and common goals that inspired the authors of the United Nations Charter. The United Nations Charter is a document of inclusion, aimed at bringing together human beings for the accomplishment of the purposes of peace, respect for human dignity, the exercise of democracy and development.

In this, the assistance of parliamentarians will be valuable. Let us think, for example, of the expertise that could be shared in the promotion and verification of free and regular elections. By uniting the efforts of the United Nations and the Inter-Parliamentary Union, we will be sharing a base of information and expertise that will assist us in better identifying problems in certain States in the process of democratizing. Let us recall also the numerous observations made recently at the Beijing meeting of the Inter-Parliamentary Union regarding the results of the World Summit for Social Development held at Copenhagen.

The Principality of Andorra is particularly interested in this subject since it authored one of the Copenhagen commitments, on inter-generational dialogue. Indeed, since they are in constant contact with the citizens they represent, those who are directly elected will be able to inspire us to put into place specific programmes to combat poverty and social marginalization.

In fact, the positions taken recently by the Inter-Parliamentary Union — on the question of landmines, the role of women in the world, or any other question — directly relate to problems to which the United Nations is particularly devoted. Thus, we must cooperate, share, and help each other.

We are sometimes discouraged to see that United Nations activities are improperly recognized, poorly appreciated and vilified. The Head of Government of Andorra, Marc Forné, called attention to this a few weeks ago during the general debate. Moreover, as the president of our Parliament, Joseph Dalleres, noted last year in this Hall, during his address to deputies of the Inter-Parliamentary Union, our venal world always focuses on the "dark spots". Working to improve communications will help enhance the view taken of the United Nations. It goes without saying that cooperation and the exchange of information with the world's parliaments, through the Inter-Parliamentary Union, is a means of providing a better understanding of the Organization. The 24 July agreement should therefore be fully implemented.

Andorra, even though a very old country, is a new member of the United Nations and of the Inter-Parliamentary Union, and it is with the ardour of a newcomer that we are encouraging cooperation between the two organizations. We did this last year, through a unanimous decision of our Parliament and the active participation of our Government, following the Madrid Conference. I can assure the Assembly that we will continue such efforts.

Mr. Wang Xuexian (China) *(interpretation from Chinese)*: The Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), an international parliamentary organization representing the parliaments of sovereign States, has traversed a course of more than 100 years. It now has 135 members and enjoys certain influence in the world. Its twice-yearly meetings in particular provide a forum for exchanging views and enhancing friendship and are thus widely accepted and welcomed by parliamentarians from all over the world.

In September this year, the IPU held its ninety-sixth session, at Beijing, at the invitation of the Chinese parliamentary delegation, the first ever held in China. The National People's Congress of China and the Chinese Government attached great importance to the meeting and made careful preparations and arrangements for it. These contributed to the complete success of the meeting and won wide acclaim from participants and others concerned. This is another important contribution that the National People's Congress has made to the IPU since it joined in 1984.

During the Beijing meeting, parliamentarians conducted full discussions and consultations on questions concerning the international political situation, world economic development and the social progress of mankind. They exchanged views and adopted relevant resolutions on the basis of mutual respect and seeking common ground while putting aside differences. Most representatives were of the view that mankind is faced with a common challenge in the wake of drastic changes in the world situation. Peace and development remain the two major issues in today's world. Countries, big or small, strong or weak, rich or poor, are equal members of the international community and are entitled to participate in international affairs on an equal footing. Respect for human rights should first ensure the right to subsistence and development. Many representatives also condemned hegemonism and power politics in their statements, and criticized the hegemonic practice of wilfully imposing sanctions against other countries.

Thanks to the vigorous participation and efforts of all representatives, in one week the meeting yielded fruitful results and achieved complete success. It played a positive role in strengthening inter-parliamentary understanding and cooperation, enhancing friendship among the peoples of all countries and promoting world peace and development. It is particularly worth mentioning that the session also helped enhance the understanding of China by parliamentarians of other counties, who saw for themselves the tremendous changes in China since the reform and opening-up, as well as the great progress the Chinese people have made in a short span of some 10 years.

The IPU is also committed to strengthening cooperation with the United Nations while playing a positive role in safeguarding world peace and promoting inter-parliamentary cooperation. The IPU Statute states explicitly that the IPU shares the objectives of the United Nations, supports its efforts and closely cooperates with it.

We are pleased to note that here at United Nations Headquarters, His Excellency Mr. Boutros Boutros-Ghali, the Secretary-General, joined with Mr. Ahmed Fathy Sorour, President of the Inter-Parliamentary Union, and Mr. Pierre Cornillon, Secretary-General of the Inter-Parliamentary Union, in signing a cooperation agreement. This was a major event in the annals of the development of the IPU as well as a starting point for cooperation between the most representative and authoritative intergovernmental international organization and the most representative inter-parliamentary international organization of sovereign States. We hope that on the basis of the agreement and through the efforts of the two organizations, the United Nations and the Governments of its Member States will be able to listen to the voices of more parliamentarians and thereby reflect the wishes of all peoples in a more comprehensive manner. We hope as well that the IPU will be able to better use its influence and role, to translate more requests and desires into practice. As the largest developing country in the world, a permanent member of the Security Council and an active participant in the activities of the IPU, China is ready to contribute its share to this end.

Mr. Park (Republic of Korea): The Republic of Korea is pleased to co-sponsor the draft resolution on "Cooperation between the United Nations and the Inter-Parliamentary Union". My delegation is convinced that it will further promote the strengthening of cooperative relations between the two organizations by creating an effective framework of mutual cooperation. We look forward to its adoption by consensus in the General Assembly. I should like to take this opportunity to express my sincere appreciation to the Egyptian delegation for the leading role it has played in drafting this important resolution.

Built as cornerstones of democracy, national parliaments have continually expanded their role in foreign affairs. In the past, their primary responsibilities

in that field were for the ratification of international conventions and the approval of the national diplomacy budget. However, the increasing complexity of global relations has made their participation in the international policy-making arena all the more relevant.

The Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) has become a focal point for national parliaments to enhance and coordinate endeavours towards the goals of the United Nations. The current memberships of the United Nations and the IPU — 185 and 135 respectively — represent a tremendous source of leadership and potential towards the promotion of international peace, security and democracy.

Since its inception in 1889, long before that of the United Nations, the IPU has upheld the principles of representative democracy and has been an ardent promoter of fundamental human rights and freedoms. Today, in the context of the new world order and a continually evolving international reality, it is imperative that the IPU and the United Nations further consolidate their alliance to address together the challenges of a newly emerging global agenda.

The declaration on "The parliamentary vision for international cooperation into the twenty-first century", adopted by the Inter-Parliamentary Council during its special session last year on the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of the United Nations, provides an effective analysis of the problems facing the United Nations in the forthcoming century and prescribes pragmatic measures by which the two international organizations together can overcome them.

The United Nations is often likened to the parliament of the world. Indeed, both the United Nations and national parliaments share the common characteristics of representativeness, and their actions are determined by deliberation, consultation, negotiation and, ultimately, legislation.

The institutionalization of a partnership between the United Nations and the IPU will undoubtedly serve to further the laudable goals that the two organizations have long stood for and continue to advocate. Moreover, closer cooperation between the United Nations and the IPU should encourage national parliaments to support the activities of the United Nations and to fulfil at the national level their responsibilities towards those goals. Obviously, the programmes and initiatives of the United Nations can only be effective with the concerted support and cooperation of the national parliaments of Member States.

The cooperation agreement between the United Nations and the IPU concluded in July of this year marks a milestone in the translation of cooperative spirit into tangible results. As the Secretary-General accurately noted in his report (A/51/402), the agreement will substantially facilitate

> "their effective exercise of mutually complementary activities." *(A/51/402, para. 5)*

Indeed, regular consultations and the active exchange of information resources will permit the initiation of joint projects and programmes by which to promote the principles enshrined in the Charter. The agreement should also advance the participation of the IPU in the activities of the various organs of the United Nations.

It was not long after the signing of the agreement that tangible signs of United Nations-IPU cooperation began to emerge. For example, this past September, the IPU, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the Department for Policy Coordination and Sustainable Development jointly organized a meeting in New York on the follow-up to the World Summit for Social Development. This meeting proved that close tripartite consultation and cooperation among parliaments, Governments and intergovernmental organizations is essential to turn summit-level agreements into working realities.

Recognizing the increasingly important role of the IPU in world affairs, and as a reaffirmation of my country's commitment to the IPU's activities, the Republic of Korea will host the ninety-seventh Inter-Parliamentary Conference this coming April in Seoul. In this connection, the Conference Organizing Committee has set the wheels in motion with supra-partisan participation and, vested with the nationwide support of the Korean people, is determined to ensure that the Seoul IPU Conference is the most successful ever.

However, the ninety-seventh Inter-Parliamentary Conference can only be considered a complete success if the full participation of all Member States is assured. In this regard, I wish to emphasize that the Seoul Conference is open to all IPU member countries, irrespective of race, ideology or political orientation. I urge every member country to attend and to help further promote the long sought-after goals and aspirations of humankind.

In conclusion, convinced that effective, ongoing cooperation between the United Nations and the IPU is fundamental to the achievement of the foregoing common objectives, my delegation looks forward to the annual inclusion of this item in the agenda of the United Nations General Assembly.

The Acting President: Before calling on the next speaker, I should like to propose that the list of speakers in the debate on this agenda item now be closed.

If there is no objection, the list of speakers will now be closed.

It was so decided.

Mr. Abdellah (Tunisia) *(interpretation from French)*: It gives me great pleasure to speak today on the item dealing with cooperation between the United Nations and the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU).

The institutionalization of the links between the universal Organization and the organization that represents elected officials of the various peoples of the world is, first and foremost, a tribute to a prestigious institution established more than a century ago. Despite the upheavals that have shaken our era, it has been able, above all, to consolidate its foundations and increase its scope by now bringing together the elected representatives of almost all Member States of the United Nations.

Making relations between the United Nations and the Inter-Parliamentary Union official is also a recognition of the role which the IPU can play through the elected officials of peoples in the promoting the ideals of the Charter of the United Nations in order to bring about a *rapprochement* between nations, improved understanding among peoples and the consolidation of democracy within States.

The cooperation that we would like to see established between the two organizations can only be beneficial and serve the interests of all our nations.

The Inter-Parliamentary Union with its democratic and representative mission, will bring a new awareness to the activities of the organization, enrich its deliberations and broaden the prospects for global thinking within the United Nations system.

In that connection, I would like to endorse the position expressed by Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali at the signature ceremony of the cooperation agreement between the United Nations and the Inter-Parliamentary Union.

With respect to the contribution the international community is entitled to expect from the institutionalization of the links between the two organizations, the Secretary-General underscored the role that the Inter-Parliamentary Union could play alongside the United Nations, especially in the interest of peace, human rights and democracy.

For its part, Tunisia welcomes the first concrete steps taken in terms of cooperation between the two organizations, through the participation of the United Nations at the ninety-fifth Inter-Parliamentary Conference, held in Istanbul in April 1996. Also welcoming this cooperation, the Secretary-General stated that parliamentarians play an essential role in the service of the United Nations Charter and that they are the best illustration of the phrase, "We the peoples of the United Nations".

Still in the context of cooperation, I wish to mention the meeting organized jointly by the Inter-Parliamentary Union, the United Nations Secretariat, the Department for Policy Coordination and Sustainable Development and the United Nations Development Programme in the framework of the follow-up to the World Summit for Social Development. That meeting, held in New York last September, made it possible to bring together parliamentarians, governmental representatives and governmental organizations for the effective implementation of the results of the Copenhagen Summit.

This approach represents a beginning of the implementation of the ideas underpinning the enhancement of the efficiency of the United Nations and has made it possible to identify a set of concrete measures that need to be taken by national parliaments, on the one hand, and by Member States, on the other. We hope this innovative approach will make it possible to implement better the decisions and recommendations adopted at the World Summit.

With respect to the future programme of cooperation between the United Nations and the Inter-Parliamentary Union, Tunisia is of the view that the two organizations must make a common commitment to meet the numerous challenges threatening the stability of our peoples and jeopardizing the ecological balance of our planet. The two organizations must therefore unite their efforts to

overcome underdevelopment, illiteracy, poverty and the over-exploitation of natural resources. Together they must contribute to the building of a freer international community, the establishment on the planet of an era of peace and solidarity and the judicious management of non-renewable natural resources.

The two organizations would thus be able to pave the way to the establishment of democracy, peace and sustainable development. This triad is at the core of the Agenda for Peace, but it is also the key ingredient for the implementation of the Agenda for Development.

In this light, parliamentarians have their share of responsibility for implementing these principles at the national and international levels. This is the fundamental concern of all constitutional institutions and the Tunisian representative bodies that took a united approach to promoting Tunisia's process of renewal this decade.

Without a doubt, parliamentarians are duty-bound to contribute to defining a world of tomorrow in which respect for the human person and his or her fundamental rights, guaranteed by the United Nations Charter and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, is more widespread than it is today.

In accordance with this approach, President Zine El Abidine Ben Ali made a solemn commitment in favour of democracy by stating,

> "Democracy is a strategic choice. Democracy will evolve together today and in harmony with the imperatives of our era, whose names are freedom, human rights and development."

Mr. Escarpeta (Colombia) *(interpretation from Spanish)*: It is a great honour and a privilege to address the Assembly on behalf of the Republic of Colombia, especially in view of the importance my country attaches to the item before us today.

We cannot but recognize the effort made by the delegation of Egypt, which has played an essential role in promoting this agreement.

At the last session of the General Assembly, Colombia, on the basis of its conviction of the need and significance of concluding a cooperation agreement between the United Nations and the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), was privileged to one of the countries that sponsored the draft resolution adopted by consensus at the plenary meeting of the Assembly on 15 November 1995.

In its wisdom, the General Assembly considered that the IPU's activities to a considerable extent complemented and supported the work of the United Nations, and therefore the Secretary-General was requested to take the necessary steps to conclude an agreement on cooperation between the two organizations.

Member States have been informed, to their great pleasure, that on 24 July 1996 the Secretary-General, Mr. Boutros Boutros-Ghali, the President of the Inter-Parliamentary Council and the Secretary-General of the Inter-Parliamentary Union signed the important cooperation agreement, in accordance with the mandate contained in resolution 50/15.

Strengthening relations between the two organizations will certainly allow for a more effective implementation of mutually complementary activities, thereby allowing both organizations to cooperate more closely in undertaking joint efforts in their particular areas of competence, which will ultimately result in greater benefit for the community of nations.

The agreement has formalized the close and longstanding bond between the two institutions in various fields and consolidated the ongoing efforts of both organizations for noble causes. In particular, it represents a further harmonizing step in the constant search for an ideal world of development, justice and peace to which we all aspire.

We intend to promote all measures necessary for progressing productively and effectively through exchanges of views, technical cooperation, coordination of measures, consultations, active participation and information and documentation exchanges so as to ensure that the cooperation agreement will benefit from the positive contributions of Member States, and that its final outcome will follow the right course, guided by the destiny of international politics.

We are sure that the common will of our States will stand out as the predominant idea in implementing the agreement, and will gain strength as it becomes part of our sovereign foundations in defence of the principles and parameters of political action inspired by our peoples. Each of us in these two important forums has been entrusted with the task of representing our States, and, as

a result of this mandate, we have an inescapable commitment to work for the success of our endeavours.

The outcome of the development of this agreement will reflect on each of the States Members of the United Nations. In this respect, I am fully convinced that it will result in vigorous action that appropriately interprets international reality and updates necessary mandates to enable both organizations to meet the challenges of the new world order.

The critical situation that exists in the present-day world has shown that the foundations of the new order are not as secure as had mistakenly been claimed. Peoples afflicted by uncertainty are still awaiting the peace and prosperity that they expected as a result of the end of the cold war. Notwithstanding some isolated positive trends, the general picture, especially in developing countries, has deteriorated rather than improved. The marked imbalance between the industrialized North and the impoverished South contrasts with the changes that have occurred in international relations.

Under no circumstances would it be politically justifiable not to promote corrective measures in all areas or to move the United Nations, at an appropriate way, closer to the effective promotion of an alternative model of development so as to ensure compatibility between the required social changes and the current opening up of our economies.

Only a short time after the signing of the Marrakesh agreements, which concluded the Uruguay Round of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade, the international trade system has been the object of many unilateral and protectionist actions by certain developed countries. Far from meeting the expectations created with regard to market access, this trend, on the contrary, brings into question the validity and utility of the new multilateral trade system as a foundation stone of the World Trade Organization, and delivers a hard blow to the new system's credibility.

We must add to this situation the many obstacles to access to financial resources, given the firm resistance to the various formulas proposed by the developing countries with regard to the mobilization of essential resources. Over the years, the economic and social institutions of the United Nations have become weaker, increasingly reflecting a reduced capacity to make concrete proposals to meet the problems of developing countries. This is becoming more and more evident, especially when we recall the ever decreasing political support and the continuing cuts in donor funding, all of which have led to the operational stagnation of these institutions.

International cooperation for development is being progressively weakened because of the many initiatives that some donor countries are tackling with indifference, so that significant cuts in the flow of official development ensue. The volume of development assistance has fallen significantly in recent years, and as a result the developing world is witnessing a painful recession that is affecting a larger percentage of the global population year by year. This is an unjust state of affairs as we move into the new century.

External debt has been overwhelming for many developing countries, and especially for the group of least developed countries, which are sinking under the weight of the obligations they have assumed without finding real solutions to help them overcome the crisis. We must promote concrete initiatives to alleviate this serious problem, and allow those States to overcome the harsh effects now confronting them.

If we wish to realize the dream of the founding fathers of the United Nations and the tenets of the Charter, we must implement relevant measures to take back leadership in international cooperation as it was understood by the founders of the Organization, who realized that development and economic and social progress are the essential foundations of peace and security.

In facing the twenty-first century, we must enable our Organization vigorously to meet the challenges of poverty eradication so that it can bridge, once and for all, the deep gap between rich and poor. It will not be feasible to go on living together under present-day conditions of inequality.

The United Nations today has a commitment to ensure that the hopes and expectations created by the end of the cold war do not become new frustrations for our peoples. We have witnessed with frustration the domination of the nuclear threat in the world. Our countries must wage one final battle to eliminate this daunting threat from the face of the earth. The risk to humankind is too high if it persists. Its elimination, however, would be a permanent legacy to future generations.

The major producers of conventional weapons have increased their sales in developing countries. Such developments require us to promote initiatives to ensure that countries in which arms-producing firms operate adopt the necessary measures to eradicate the illegal traffic in such weapons and to control their commercial flows.

The debate and the search for solutions to these priority issues must also be addressed, as implementation of the cooperation agreement with the Inter-Parliamentary Union develops. It would be particularly significant if, with the bridge that has been laid between the two organizations, the parliaments of developed countries can be made aware of concerns such as those that have been pointed out today, so that they can respond positively in their sphere of competence.

The United Nations needs the support of parliaments. Its noble objectives are more likely to become reality if the world's legislative bodies understand, believe in and fully support its cause, and if they complement and, as appropriate, put into practice measures that require it.

This is a solemn and happy time for the Organization. New and necessary foundations have been laid between two of the world's major collegiate bodies, which have the privilege to have among their ranks enlightened spokespersons from all over the world, which constantly seek the same ideal of harmony and coexistence on the vast and glorious stage formed by all the continents, and which raise their voices in this Hall for the supreme ideal of peace.

It behoves us to continue to search for a new way that replaces confrontation by the search for cooperation as the crux of our actions, based on mutual respect and the defence of the principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations, with the resolute and historic purpose of contributing collectively to strengthening the world on the basis of new and better levels of justice, equity and social development.

As the problems faced in the community of nations seem more acute, solutions become more difficult and the international community trembles at the threat of new confrontations. We are duty bound, energetically and by every possible means, to seek reconciliation among men, dialogue, consensus and concerted action.

It is essential that indissoluble and unshakable unity be maintained as a central feature of our world, our Governments, parliaments and peoples. In this way, common interests will prevail on the international scene, our voice will be heard in the decision-making process, and we will have a vital place in world political development.

We therefore need to reaffirm the points of convergence at the tops of our voices, in order to strengthen our positions so that they carry the weight they deserve in the international community — the weight and the exalted power represented by the voice of 185 countries that make up the membership of this Organization.

I am fully convinced that the common will of the States gathered here will be strengthened through the full implementation of this agreement for the common benefit of all humankind.

The Acting President: Before I proceed, I should like to inform the Assembly that the representative of Sudan has requested to participate in the debate on this item. Inasmuch as the list of speakers was closed this morning at 11 a.m., may I ask the Assembly whether there is any objection to including Sudan on the list of speakers?

If I hear no objection, the Assembly will include Sudan on the list of speakers.

It was so decided.

Mrs. Heptulla (India): It is once again a great privilege to speak in support of cooperation between the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) and the United Nations. It reminds me of the discussions during the last session when this august Assembly began the process of establishing a framework of cooperation by unanimously endorsing resolution 50/15 on 15 November 1995.

The Secretary-General in his report (A/51/402) has informed us that the modest goal set forth in resolution 50/15 has been met with the conclusion on 24 July 1996 of a cooperation agreement between the United Nations and the IPU.

This important initial step has opened up new vistas of cooperation. We need to pool our resources and our experience to devise complementary plans of action to address our common problems. Having had the unique privilege of working in close association with both the organizations - as Human Development Ambassador of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)

and as a member of the Executive Committee of the IPU, I realize how essential it is for strong ties of cooperation to exist between the United Nations and the IPU.

Of all the international institutions, the IPU was amongst the first to promote the idea of creating a world organization of nations. It is perhaps one of the world's unique institutions in the sense that its members are drawn from a wide spectrum of legislatures representing various shades of public opinion. They include not only the Government but also the opposition, and thus represent the diverse will of the people in the true sense of the phrase.

The IPU, while striving to promote international peace and development and a better understanding of various problems faced by humanity, works in close cooperation with other international organizations. In its multifarious activities, the IPU has worked in close coordination with the United Nations. A large number of United Nations agencies and subsidiary organs are represented at senior levels in the Union's statutory conferences. Several specialized conferences, on a variety of issues, have also been organized jointly or in close cooperation with United Nations bodies including the International Labour Organization (ILO), the World Health Organization (WHO), the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and others. Meetings to bring together senior United Nations officials and parliamentarians attending the United Nations General Assembly as members of their national delegations are held each year in New York to review major initiatives and programmes of the United Nations.

The IPU members submit to their respective assemblies and Governments the resolutions adopted by the Union and promote their implementation. It is expected that the members of the parliaments attending the IPU conferences will in turn disseminate the discussions and conclusions of the conferences back in their countries and pass these opinions on to the masses. Cooperation between the United Nations and the IPU will give a greater opportunity to the United Nations, through the elected representatives, to familiarize the people with its objectives and achievements.

The IPU has been evincing growing interest in various international issues affecting its member countries and their peoples. Two full plenary sessions of the IPU each year are devoted entirely to serious problems and situations confronted by the people in general. The IPU also organizes specialized worldwide or regional conferences and symposiums, aimed at bringing together parliamentarians and experts to study certain specific problems of international security, development, human rights, social affairs, disarmament and so on.

Apart from regular Conferences, which are convened twice a year, the IPU has called special sessions in support of United Nations-sponsored world conferences on various aspects of comprehensive human development. It has lent full support to United Nations programmes and plans of action. Special sessions of the IPU were called to supplement the United Nations efforts at the Cairo International Conference on Population and Development in 1994 and at the World Summit for Social Development at Copenhagen in 1995. The member parliaments again met at a special session on 7 September 1995 to offer their support to the Fourth World Conference on Women at Beijing. All these conferences, held at the initiative of the IPU, indicate the complementarity of focus of the IPU and the United Nations.

Like the United Nations, the welfare and concerns of women has been a matter of special importance for the IPU. India, for its part, has always placed emphasis on this vital social issue. The Indian people, Government and Parliament have highlighted this aspect nationally as well as internationally. As a national commitment, after empowering women at the local level through a constitutional amendment reserving seats for women in local bodies, the Indian Parliament is now considering a bill to reserve 33 per cent of seats in the state legislatures and in the National Parliament.

In the international arena, a special Conference of the IPU, as a follow-up to the Beijing Conference, is being hosted at New Delhi from 14 to 18 February 1997 on the theme "Towards Partnership Between Men and Women in Politics". This major Conference will bring together parliamentarians from 136 countries, United Nations agencies, media, non-governmental organizations, academics and activists to fan the flame of equality lit by the United Nations in Mexico and stoked at Nairobi and Beijing. As the Chairperson of the National Steering Committee for this Conference, I take this opportunity to invite you all to attend this event.

The possibilities of cooperation between the United Nations and the IPU for the common benefit of mankind are enormous. Cooperation between these two organizations is aimed at weaving an everlasting social fabric based on fraternity, equality and liberty for all and

at working jointly to ensure peaceful coexistence for our future generations. It should be not only our endeavour and commitment, but also our duty to strengthen a better and prosperous global society. It is in this context that I commend to this Assembly the unanimous adoption of the draft resolution contained in document A/51/L.6.

Mr. Dzassohov (Russian Federation) *(interpretation from Russian)*: Many diplomats and parliamentarians were witnesses to and participants in the initiatives that have made today's debate possible. It will undoubtedly go down in the political annals of the modern world as the beginning of a qualitatively new era in the relations between the United Nations and the Inter-Parliamentary Union. This prompts us to express our well-deserved thanks to Mr. Boutros Boutros-Ghali, Mr. Ahmed Fathy Sorour and, of course, Mr. Pierre Cornillon, the Secretary-General of the Inter-Parliamentary Union, who is here with us today, for it is precisely their efforts and practical steps that are so greatly appreciated in the national Parliaments of the United Nations Member States.

Allow me to make the following brief comments. First, it has become customary to characterize the post-cold-war period as a movement towards democracy and parliamentarianism. It is precisely in this framework that we are debating the draft resolution before us today, as it is fully consonant with the spirit and will of the peoples of the world.

Secondly, the transition to representative democracy under way in many regions of the world, such as Eastern and Central Europe, my country, the Russian Federation, and the countries of the Commonwealth of Independent States, is gaining momentum and even new experience. In turn, the United Nations and its Secretary-General are encouraging new democracies. We can speak of the timeliness of this direction in United Nations activities because the theoretical conceptualization of the interesting democratization processes sometimes, unfortunately, lag behind modern global political realities.

How do we propose effectively to gather public opinion and to bring the full potential of civil society into play? This is something we all seek. In our view, we can solicit the greater involvement of the representatives of national Parliaments in discussions on major United Nations issues. I am convinced that gathering new experience and enhancing cooperation between legislative and executive authorities are urgent international priorities for the international community.

Thirdly, the issue before the General Assembly is conducive to efforts along the "diplomat-deputy" approach. Speaking in May this year before the National Duma of the Russian Federation, Mr. Boutros Boutros-Ghali correctly stated that the peoples of the world, and even many politicians, have an incomplete picture of the full spectrum of the issues being addressed by the main international Organization.

For example, they see only episodes of peace-building, but not the rest of the process. Today, when cooperation between the United Nations and the Inter-Parliamentary Union is at a new stage of its development, it is extremely important to see high-ranking United Nations Secretariat officials and the heads of diplomatic missions of the members of the international community regularly in the halls and meeting rooms of national parliaments.

Moreover, after each round of general policy discussions — and this is an atmosphere that one finds only here at United Nations headquarters — the heads of delegations could address national parliaments on their outcome.

Fourthly, the delegation of the Russian Federation particularly supports and welcomes paragraph 3 of draft resolution A/51/L.6 on the inclusion in the agenda of the fifty-second session of the General Assembly of an item concerning cooperation between the two organizations. However, we ourselves — parliamentarians, the Executive Committee and the Inter-Parliamentary Council — can and must do a great deal to make future deliberations productive and to consolidate the breakthrough in cooperation between legislators and diplomats.

Fifthly, at every stage of promoting the idea of cooperation in the form now being discussed by the General Assembly, Russia, and particularly the Russian Parliament, has been interested in developing such efforts with the United Nations. A great contribution to the successful coordination of the preparatory work in this endeavour was made by the Ambassador of Egypt, Mr. Elaraby, for which we are very grateful to him. He reaffirmed that contribution in his introduction today.

At the same time, I would like to declare that Russia joins the sponsors of this draft resolution.

In conclusion, I wish everyone every success in this new endeavour.

Mr. Larraín (Chile) *(interpretation from Spanish)*: Today, the General Assembly is considering the draft resolution entitled "Cooperation between the United Nations and the Inter-Parliamentary Union", which my country has co-sponsored and hopes will be adopted by consensus.

My delegation, like most delegations present, believes that the activities of the Inter-Parliamentary Union supplement and support the work of the United Nations. We witnessed this at the international conferences convened by the Organization, which benefited from the cooperation of that parliamentary body and from its tireless interest in bringing new elements to the debates of the United Nations on such important topics as, *inter alia*, anti-personnel landmines and the rights of women and children.

We particularly welcome at this time the cooperation agreement signed between the two organizations on 24 July 1996. This agreement strengthens relations between the two organizations, principally in promoting peace, human rights and democracy in the world.

This agreement has already yielded results. On 5 and 6 September 1996, both organizations held a meeting in this city on the follow-up to the World Summit for Social Development. The meeting was aimed at enhancing cooperation among parliaments, Governments and intergovernmental organizations for the effective implementation of the agreements reached in Copenhagen. They drew up a practical catalogue of concrete steps and actions to be taken by national parliaments and their members in this respect.

My delegation believes that substantial cooperation between the two organizations — one representing Governments and the other representing parliaments — will also serve as a better expression of the will and interests of peoples at the international level.

Likewise, my delegation believes that a closer relationship with the Inter-Parliamentary Union is yet another United Nations show of support for democracies throughout the world and a way of strengthening — especially at the international level — the recognition due to the legislative branches of government, which are manifestations of popular will.

In view of the above, my delegation believes that cooperation between the United Nations and the various parliamentary groups is very valuable. We also wish to express in this regard our support for Parliamentarians for Global Action. That organization has done important work for international peace and security, human rights and democracy in the world. In so doing, it has supported the purposes and principles of the United Nations. It is still possible to remember the fundamental role it played a few years ago in the so-called Six-Nation Initiative. More recently, it played a very important role in Burundi in the search for dialogue and understanding among parliamentarians themselves and with the United Nations system.

Mr. Fulci (Italy): As a sponsor of the draft resolution, Italy wishes to voice its support for this document. The draft welcomes the conclusion, on 24 July 1996, of the agreement between the United Nations and the Inter-Parliamentary Union — an agreement which creates an appropriate and long-needed framework for increasing cooperation between the two organizations.

We are especially grateful to the Permanent Representative of Egypt, Ambassador Nabil Elaraby, for his clear, comprehensive and thoughtful introduction of the draft resolution and are confident that the General Assembly will adopt it by consensus.

The Inter-Parliamentary Union is an organization of national parliaments. As we all know, parliaments are the highest expression of the ideals of democracy within the structure of a State. They are called on to perform fundamental tasks not only in the domestic domain, but also in international matters. They adopt laws and exercise control over Governments. They ratify treaties, implement laws and determine State policy towards international organizations.

Today, in a world in which States are more and more interdependent, rather than independent, parliaments are called on to play an unprecedented role in international cooperation as well. Parliaments represent the people and their will is the highest expression of the will of all the citizens of a country. In other words, they are the means to enhance democracy.

As the President of the Republic of Italy, Oscar Luigi Scalfaro, said in his address to the General Assembly on 3 April 1996:

> "The *raison d'être* of the United Nations is the defence of the individual, of humanity.
>
> ..."

"The immense task of humanitarian aid is certainly the truest path to peace. This is because it involves sharing in the suffering of others.

"And let us not forget that helping people to live in freedom, to enjoy social justice worthy of man, to live in democracy, is certainly the highest form of humanitarian aid." *(Official Records of the General Assembly, Fiftieth Session, Plenary Meetings, 103rd meeting, p. 4)*

The General Assembly is and must remain the bedrock of our Organization. It empowers all the other bodies of the United Nations, including the Security Council, two thirds of whose members the General Assembly elects. The General Assembly reflects the opinions of our peoples and strengthens ties with the institutional realities of the Member States. For many years now, the Italian delegation to the general debate of the General Assembly has included representatives of both the Senate and the Chamber of Deputies of Italy. This has proved to be a most positive experience, giving our political forces a fuller appreciation of the role and activities of the United Nations.

The Italian Parliament has been following the work of the United Nations more and more closely in recent years. In January, on the occasion of the visit of Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali to Rome, the whole Italian Government met with the Chamber of Deputies in solemn commemoration of the fiftieth anniversary of the United Nations. On 9 October, the other House of Parliament, the Senate, dedicated a long and meaningful debate to the issue of Security Council reform. At the end, a resolution was adopted to:

"support in all the competent forums the reform objectives defined in the statement by the Minister of Foreign Affairs to the fifty-first session of the United Nations General Assembly, starting with the Italian proposal for a reform of the Security Council."

This issue was also considered at the special session of the Council of the Inter-Parliamentary Union held at the United Nations headquarters last year from 30 August to 1 September.

Since its establishment more than a century ago, the Inter-Parliamentary Union has greatly contributed to international cooperation. Its action has been aimed at various objectives, in particular the peaceful settlement of disputes, the enhancement of democracy and the safeguarding of human rights throughout the world. It has promoted free elections and democratic institutions, fostered the participation of women in political life and supported the protection of minorities. In other words, the Inter-Parliamentary Union has constantly worked to affirm the ideals and to pursue the goals of modern international society.

The strengthening of cooperation between the United Nations and the Union will be highly beneficial to both institutions. But more than anything else, it will greatly contribute to reaffirming and implementing, on the threshold of the third millennium, the purposes and principles enshrined in our Charter.

Mr. Laclaustra (Spain) *(interpretation from Spanish)*: Parliamentary democracy is the natural framework for the development of the conditions most appropriate to international peace and security. Furthermore, the purposes and principles of the United Nations are in close agreement with the guidelines and criteria that have inspired the constitutions of peace-loving States.

The Inter-Parliamentary Union embodies at the international level the important role of national parliaments and is a forum for reflection and debate on the solutions needed to meet the challenges and requirements of today's society.

At the fiftieth session of the General Assembly, my delegation emphasized its support for greater cooperation between the United Nations and the Inter-Parliamentary Union — a cooperation that, in our view, should be given an appropriate institutional framework.

In this connection, my delegation welcomes the signing on 24 July of this year of a cooperation agreement between the United Nations and the Inter-Parliamentary Union. This is not the time for an analysis of or detailed comments on the provisions of that important text, but we wish to express our satisfaction at the opportunity that has emerged since its signature for the Inter-Parliamentary Union to be invited to participate in the debates of United Nations bodies and in conferences and meetings held under its auspices.

That participation of the Inter-Parliamentary Union in United Nations activities will undoubtedly be extremely useful and beneficial for both organizations, as it will allow for the mutual exchange of information and for interaction between them.

With reference to the draft resolution on this item introduced by the delegation of Egypt, it has been a pleasure for my delegation to be among its sponsors. We trust that draft resolution A/51/L.6 will enjoy the unanimous support of the General Assembly.

In conclusion, I wish to reiterate the support of the delegation of Spain for continued cooperation between the two organizations, sharing as it does their interest and concern for a world of greater peace and security.

Mr. Hayat (Pakistan): On behalf of the Pakistan delegation, I would like to thank the delegation of Egypt for introducing draft resolution A/51/L.6 and underlining the importance of cooperation between the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) and the United Nations.

On the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of the United Nations, while giving the parliamentary vision for international cooperation into the twenty-first century, the members of the IPU reaffirmed the soaring vision and common purposes that animated the drafters of the United Nations Charter. They rededicated themselves to strengthening the bonds of the world community for the realization of the ideals of that Charter. To contribute actively to the work of the United Nations, the Union decided to establish a formal framework for cooperation between the two organizations.

The United Nations has made invaluable contributions in a number of crucial areas, including peacekeeping, economic development, humanitarian assistance and the establishment of legal norms. Yet it has not been able to live up to the expectations of the peoples. To respond to their wishes, the United Nations needs to become more accessible to new actors, such as non-governmental organizations, who represent the civil society. These actors are playing an increasingly important role in many areas. Associations such as the IPU, the Parliamentarians for Global Action and other similar organizations are uniquely placed to build such bridges. While such associations can generate support for the United Nations to strengthen its role, they can certainly also sensitize the United Nations to the aspirations of the peoples.

At the political level, the IPU can help mobilize public opinion in favour of the United Nations. Parliamentarians can launch information campaigns to make their constituents aware of the accomplishments of the United Nations. Such an exercise is essential. In many countries people are either indifferent or becoming hostile to calls for greater financial and material support for the United Nations.

The United Nations efforts to establish the rule of law at the international level must be supported. In this regard, while preparing legislation, parliaments should take United Nations resolutions and decisions into account. National laws ought not to be at variance with the decisions that are agreed upon in the United Nations. Similarly, to augment the role of the United Nations in promoting international peace and security, legislators should ensure that the executive branch of the Government implements the resolutions and decisions adopted by the United Nations.

To enhance the efficacy of the United Nations, parliamentarians can also sensitize the United Nations to the expectations of the peoples they represent. For some, the United Nations has not made enough progress in achieving the goals of peace, security and stability. In certain regions of the world, it has not been successful in ameliorating the sufferings of the people. Lack of action in Bosnia reinforced doubts about the ability of the United Nations to deal with conflicts. In our own region, the Kashmir dispute is still simmering and the people of Kashmir are still waiting for the United Nations to take measures for the implementation of the Security Council resolutions.

Mutual cooperation between the IPU and the United Nations can help in harnessing the power of the peoples for the realization of the lofty ideals of the United Nations Charter. At the operational level, the IPU can contribute to the United Nations role in the promotion of democracy, peacekeeping and peace-building.

To acquaint the nascent democracies with the new system of governance, the IPU, in collaboration with the United Nations, could launch an information and support programme. The sharing of information through the reliable United Nations channels would facilitate institution-building in relatively young parliaments.

In the field of peacekeeping and peace-building, the parliamentarians of major troop-contributing countries might consider the establishment of an IPU forum or caucus on United Nations peacekeeping operations. Such a caucus might arrange seminars and public campaigns in support of the United Nations peacekeeping endeavours. The parliamentarians can sensitize the public to the significance of these operations and ask the Governments to meet their obligations to this end.

The IPU and the United Nations share a common interest in maintaining peace and promoting economic development for the betterment of the peoples of the world. As a representative body of the peoples of the world, the IPU has an important role to play in the realization of a world free of the scourges of war, hunger, poverty and disease. To achieve these goals, both organizations should actively utilize the framework for cooperation.

Mr. Abdelhamid (Sudan) *(interpretation from Arabic)*: Thank you for giving me this opportunity to address the General Assembly regarding the support and endorsement of the cooperation agreement between the United Nations and the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU).

I did not want to miss such an opportunity to reaffirm our support for this agreement. We hope that it will contribute to the good of humanity in general. This is particularly true since Sudan has played an active leadership role in the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) for some time now. I have been sent here by my Parliament, which was recently elected in free, fair elections in which for the first time there was substantial participation. I want to state the desire and the interest of my people to support cooperation between the two organizations.

Parliaments express the real will of peoples, and they express the interest of peoples in sharing power. We hope that as a result of the expected popular participation in parliaments, and the participation of all parliaments in the joint endeavours of the United Nations and the IPU, the hopes of peoples will be fulfilled and that we will come closer to dealing with questions of world peace and development.

We reaffirm that the United Nations is the mechanism which can coordinate all the efforts of the world for the good of humanity in all spheres: economic, developmental and others. Addressing this human, development aspect involves dealing with all spheres of cultural and economic diversity in an objective manner very different from the indifference that is shown in dealing with some of the other global questions that may be discussed in the General Assembly or the Security Council.

Once again I would like to express our absolute support for the cooperation agreement signed between the United Nations and the IPU.

The Acting President: We have heard the last speaker in the debate on this item.

We shall now proceed to take a decision on draft resolution A/51/L.6. In this connection, I should like to announce that since the introduction of the draft resolution Kyrgyzstan, Madagascar, Nicaragua, Peru, the Russian Federation and Tunisia have become sponsors of the draft resolution.

May I take it that the Assembly decides to adopt draft resolution A/51/L.6?

The draft resolution was adopted (resolution 51/7).

The Acting President: May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to conclude its consideration of agenda item 29?

It was so decided.

Agenda item 36

International assistance for the rehabilitation and reconstruction of Nicaragua: aftermath of the war and natural disasters

Report of the Secretary-General (A/51/263)

Draft resolution (A/51/L.3)

The Acting President: I call on the representative of Nicaragua to introduce draft resolution A/51/L.3.

Mr. Vilchez Asher (Nicaragua) *(interpretation from Spanish)*: It is an honour for me to introduce, on behalf of the other sponsors, the draft resolution contained in document A/51/L.3, entitled "International assistance for the rehabilitation and reconstruction of Nicaragua: aftermath of the war and natural disasters". I should like to announce that the following additional countries have become sponsors of the draft resolution: Benin, Canada, Germany, Jamaica, Panama, Romania, Suriname, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Venezuela. While thanking the Secretariat for the report contained in document A/51/263, which reflects the progress and the difficulties in our transition process, we wish to request that in the future more space be given to aspects relating to projects and objectives implemented by the specialized agencies of the United Nations system.

The draft resolution we are introducing together with the other sponsors emphasizes the concerns of a country which has needed the sustained support of the international community to try to overcome the aftermath

of the war in the midst of a triple transition — from war to peace, from a centralized economy to a market economy, and from authoritarianism to democracy — and at the same time to deal with a heavy external-debt burden and the economic effects of hurricanes and other natural disasters.

This draft resolution requests the Secretary-General, in cooperation with the relevant organs and organizations of the United Nations system and in close cooperation with Nicaraguan authorities, to continue to provide all necessary assistance for the reconstruction, stabilization and development of Nicaragua. We trust that this brief and clear draft resolution will be adopted by the General Assembly without a vote.

Since this initiative came to the General Assembly for the first time as a result of Nicaragua's urgent needs in 1990 at the end of its decade-long armed conflict and of its starting on the path to democracy and economic and social development, we have seen emergency assistance to be a temporary but very effective mechanism to help resolve the difficult problems of transition. We hope these problems will soon be overcome. In this context, the emergency assistance for the reconstruction of our country which States, international organizations, the World Bank and non-governmental organizations lent to us during the Administration of Violeta Barrios de Chamorro has made a major contribution to strengthening democracy, consolidating the rule of law, eliminating poverty and, in general, to peace in Central America. The Support Group for Nicaragua approved by the General Assembly and made up of Canada, Mexico, the Netherlands, Spain and Sweden has also played an important role in the search for consensus and in support for economic recovery.

There has certainly been broad participation on the part of the international community in peace-building in Nicaragua. In this regard, we can mention, among the many projects which have been carried out, reducing and professionalizing the army and the national police and involving former members of the Nicaraguan resistance in productive projects for economic development. Also with international support, we have financed programmes to reintegrate the population displaced and otherwise affected by the war, especially in rural areas in the north of the country. Such support has also promoted programmes for disarming the civilian population during the first years of the Chamorro Administration. In the field of economic recovery, we have promoted credit programmes to strengthen micro- and small businesses both in rural areas and in the cities. We have privatized most of the State-held enterprises. With the cooperation of friendly countries, which provided the necessary resources, we have undertaken major efforts to negotiate and purchase the commercial debt.

This enormous effort to renegotiate the debt is providing our country with a new opportunity to participate and to be a part of the world's economic system. We must realize that the effort made by our creditors may not be repeated, and applying for new loans in a responsible manner must be part of our principal purposes. Despite the reduction of the external debt achieved so far, Nicaragua continues to be a low-income country with high debts. It is therefore essential for us to continue those negotiations. In this regard, Nicaragua needs the support of the international community to continue to make progress towards a definitive solution in the process of renegotiating its external debt so that the effective servicing of the debt will be compatible with its capacity to pay.

The untenability of Nicaragua's external debt has been recognized in the G-7 initiative submitted to the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF), which provides for an external debt relief mechanism for highly indebted countries, so that they can sustain its servicing.

With international assistance, and with the exceptional treatment given to our country by the General Assembly, peace and democracy are being consolidated in Nicaragua. This is reflected above all in the great reduction of political violence, the full establishment of public freedoms for the first time in the history of the country, the increasingly independent operation of the organs of the State, the decentralization of the central Government and the strengthening of local governments. The population at large recognizes these achievements and, after a decade of armed and fratricidal conflict, agrees that one of the most important achievements has been that of pacification.

While the country is at peace and has resumed its economic growth, the impact of the conflict on employment and underemployment indicators has kept them below expectations. Nicaragua continues to face major problems in terms of social indicators; poverty continues to be one of the main problems affecting a large part of the population. In these conditions, to help consolidate democracy we need the continued support of the international community and the United Nations, which has so generously supported us in recent years.

The Government, for its part, is undertaking great efforts in various fields to alleviate these problems.

In the context of the undeniable achievements and efforts of the Government of Doña Violeta Barrios de Chamorro to consolidate national reconciliation, peace, economic and social development and the rule of law in Nicaragua, on 20 October 1996 the Nicaraguan people held elections for President, the Legislature, local authorities and the Central American Parliament. The results of these elections, their significance and the transparency and seriousness with which they were held show the great importance that most of the Nicaraguan people attach to the final consolidation of democracy, peace and economic and social development.

Nicaragua cannot return to the past. The definitive solution to the problem of the external debt, of ownership and of a considerable improvement in national, foreign and private investment, in the framework of a sound and responsible macroeconomic policy favouring internal savings and contributing to improving the standard of living of the Nicaraguan people, must be our goal.

Nicaragua has reiterated its desire to be a peaceful and hard-working nation, and it has reiterated its appeal to all United Nations Member States to support its effort to consolidate peace and democracy — not only in Nicaragua but in Central America as a whole. As part of this effort, we have urgently needed the resolute support of the international community to maintain the hopes of a people that wishes to reconstruct its country in peace, justice and democracy. International assistance for the rehabilitation and reconstruction of Nicaragua has been in a pragmatic, concrete, realistic and well-founded way to contribute to the universal values that guide the United Nations.

Nicaragua has needed the support and solidarity of the international community to overcome the aftermath of war and the natural disasters that have stricken it in recent years. The unanimous adoption of the relevant resolutions since 1991 constitutes a clear sign of the political will of the international community to support the political and economic process that the people and the Government of Nicaragua are carrying out. All of this will result in the consolidation of peace and the democratic process in Nicaragua.

Once again, on behalf of the sponsors, I request that the draft resolution contained in document A/51/L.3 be adopted by consensus.

Mr. Petrella (Argentina) *(interpretation from Spanish)*: It is of particular interest for my delegation to participate in the debate on agenda item 36, entitled "International assistance for the rehabilitation and reconstruction of Nicaragua: aftermath of the war and natural disasters".

First of all, we wish to congratulate the delegation of that country on the noteworthy democratic elections held a few days ago.

As we have stated in previous debates on this question, Argentina understands that assistance to Nicaragua is a case from which we can draw guidelines that are useful for the entire system of international cooperation for development. The process in Nicaragua combines two situations that deserve attention in terms of reconstruction. One is the situation of post-conflict institutional and economic deterioration, although at the institutional level exemplary progress has been achieved, as shown by the recent elections to which I just referred. The other is the situation stemming from the aftermath of natural disasters.

A characteristic specific to the Nicaraguan process is that rehabilitation and reconstruction are taking place in a pluralistic framework, with the participation of all sectors of the population. To complement this effort by the people of Nicaragua, the United Nations must aim its technical cooperation and economic activities towards the objective of consolidating the democratic system and of strengthening institutions, these being the essential elements for the stability of the country and for promoting economic growth.

We must also recall that the Nicaraguan process is part of an overall regional process of democratization. Therefore, improvements in that country will have a positive impact for all of Central America.

We are aware of the serious difficulties faced by Nicaragua. To the circumstances already mentioned, we must add the burden of the external debt, which hampers productive investment and capital flows. Aware of this fact, Argentina has cancelled Nicaragua's debt. We encourage other creditor countries to do likewise, and urge the General Assembly to issue a recommendation along the same lines. In addition, in connection with concrete commitments to the task of rehabilitation and reconstruction in Nicaragua, Argentina has developed several technical cooperation projects between the two

countries, focusing on areas such as human resource training, agriculture, forestry, fisheries and energy.

Before concluding, we wish to express our appreciation for the work done by the Support Group for Nicaragua which, under the leadership of the Secretary-General, is playing a very active and dynamic role in supporting efforts at economic rehabilitation and social development in the country.

We also wish to express gratitude for the efforts of the international community, including the organs and organizations of the United Nations system, to complement the initiatives taken by the Nicaraguan Government.

Finally, we wish to reiterate our request for support to give special political, technical and financial attention to Nicaragua. Such assistance will allow the Nicaraguan Government to prepare medium- and long-term plans for its economic reconstruction and to consolidate and strengthen its institutions.

My delegation lends its full support to the draft resolution under consideration by the Assembly and hopes that it will be adopted without a vote.

Mr. Valle (Brazil) *(interpretation from Spanish)*: Nicaragua has made great progress since this item was included on the agenda of the General Assembly's forty-seventh session. Brazil has been closely following the progress made in Central America and especially in Nicaragua. As a member of the Support Group of the countries of the Contadora Group, Brazil participated in the successful efforts to bring peace to Central America through dialogue and reconciliation. Together with the efforts made by the Organization of American States (OAS) and the United Nations, bilateral contributions have, without doubt, facilitated progress in the peace process.

In 1990 Nicaragua was still immersed in conflict. Today, towards the end of the present Administration, Nicaragua is a different country. President Violeta Chamorro will soon have fulfilled the aspiration expressed in her recently published autobiography to transfer power to someone who is also elected by the people. The Government of Violeta Chamorro deserves credit for having created conditions for national reconciliation, and the Nicaraguan people deserve our respect and solidarity for having taken up the banner of peace.

The Nicaraguan people can continue to look towards the future with confidence. Their institutions have been reorganized to provide a solid basis for democracy to thrive in an atmosphere of respect for civil liberties and protection of human rights. The ongoing economic and financial reforms are laying the ground for social and economic development. The establishment of peace in the region has produced a favourable environment for increased trade and economic cooperation. The process of consolidating democracy in Central America has reinvigorated cooperation in the region.

In spite of this positive evolution, Nicaragua still faces substantial challenges. Its high rate of population growth, combined with a stagnant gross domestic product, has been reducing the already low per capita income. A succession of natural emergencies has compounded the country's difficulties. The report of the Secretary-General (A/51/263) points to a change in this tendency and presents us with brighter prospects.

However, the assistance provided through multilateral or bilateral channels remains an essential component of the Government's attempts to provide Nicaraguan society with adequate education, sanitary facilities and other basic infrastructure. The United Nations, through the United Nations Development Programme and other specialized agencies and bodies, has been playing a vital role in assisting Nicaraguans to modernize their country, as can be seen from the successive reports submitted by the Secretary-General to the General Assembly.

Brazil, motivated by a wish to show material support for peace and development in Nicaragua, has been participating, under the aegis of OAS, in efforts to demine Nicaraguan territory, and has become involved in projects for the advancement of rural areas, in accordance with General Assembly resolutions.

Last year we attended the meeting of the consultative group that coordinates international assistance for Nicaragua, and we are continuing to collaborate in human resources development as well as in other fields.

Brazil has likewise demonstrated its readiness to enter into negotiations with a view to finding a mutually satisfactory solution to the question of outstanding Nicaraguan debt, within the framework of the Paris Club. In July 1996 we sponsored the resolution adopted by the Economic and Social Council on emergency assistance to Costa Rica and Nicaragua.

Brazil wishes to take this opportunity to express its support to the people of Nicaragua as they pursue the process of consolidating democracy in their country. We will continue to seek ways to increase our cooperation, and we reaffirm our willingness to contribute to progress in Nicaragua.

Mr. Fulci (Italy): Italy wishes to express its appreciation for the Secretary-General's report entitled "International assistance for the rehabilitation and reconstruction of Nicaragua: aftermath of the war and natural disasters". After the dark years of civil war and the difficult post-war period, Nicaragua is taking definite steps toward economic development. Peace prospers and grows through social justice. It is our hope that the Nicaraguan Government will continue to pursue policies that assure sustainable development.

We were pleased to learn of the great achievements of the Nicaraguan democracy under the able leadership of President Violeta Chamorro and of its successful efforts in combating inflation and increasing gross national product. However, external debt continues to mortgage Nicaraguan development. That is why Italy has decided to continue to express, in a concrete manner — with deeds, not just words — its friendship and solidarity with the Nicaraguan Government and people through a unilateral reduction of the external debt.

It is known that Italy participated actively in the consolidation of the peace process in Central America through the financing of the Development Programme for Displaced Persons, Refugees and Returnees (PRODERE) in six countries in the region, including Nicaragua. I do not need to recall here what PRODERE has done or the goals that it has achieved. Others with expertise in development policies have already done so through the years. The Administrator of the United Nations Development Programme, Mr. Speth, called PRODERE

> "an extraordinary example of implementation, at the local level, of the human development model".

The former President of Costa Rica and Nobel laureate for peace, Oscar Arias, presented to the United Nations the report on the external and independent evaluation of PRODERE. President Arias said:

> "The terror, which a history of repression and political disintegration had instilled in the population, was progressively replaced by a climate of confidence suitable to a genuine state of law in the areas where PRODERE operated."

Encouraged by this very positive experience, Italy has decided to continue to support United Nations action in Central America. In Nicaragua, with the United Nations Development Programme and the United Nations Office for Project Services, Italy is supporting the Alliance for Sustainable Development through the Programme for Sustainable Human Development at the Local Level. In this framework, the Italian Government is about to finance a new project to improve health infrastructures in Nueva Segovia and Jinotega for a total of about $2 million.

Our colleague the Permanent Representative of Nicaragua, Ambassador Erich Vilchez Asher, has just mentioned the natural disasters that have plagued this country. Also in this regard, may I recall that last summer we responded to the humanitarian appeal following Hurricane Caesar, and pledged a contribution for emergency relief assistance to the victims of the hurricane.

Italy has the real pleasure to be once again among the co-sponsors of the draft resolution on humanitarian assistance to Nicaragua. On behalf of my country, I also wish to confirm our unwavering political support for Nicaragua and for its Government. As Ambassador Vilchez Asher very rightly and eloquently said a few minutes ago:

> "Nicaragua cannot return to the past." *(supra, p. 19)*

This is also our strong belief and our most sincere wish.

Mr. Runge (Germany): The report of the Secretary-General on international assistance for the rehabilitation and reconstruction of Nicaragua (A/51/263), which has been presented today, illustrates in a vivid manner the many and successful steps Nicaragua has taken, after years of internal conflict, towards peace, the consolidation of democracy and economic recovery. The election has been one more important step in this direction, even though the aftermath of the conflict is still weighing heavily on the country and natural disasters continue to aggravate the situation.

Democracy and the rule of law have been accepted by the population of Nicaragua in an unprecedented manner. All major political questions are being discussed in Parliament and translated into action in a democratic fashion. We are therefore convinced that Nicaragua will continue on its path of reconciliation and reconstruction.

We welcome the continued support rendered to Nicaragua and its people by the international community. Germany, as the third largest bilateral donor, is one of Nicaragua's major partners in the field of economic cooperation. While in the beginning of this partnership large amounts had to be contributed towards emergency measures, today the extensive bilateral development cooperation focuses mainly on the consolidation of structural adaptation processes, the rehabilitation of social infrastructures, the promotion of private enterprises (including vocational training), agricultural development, and the protection of the environment and natural resources.

In this context, our cooperation is increasingly directed towards rural areas, focusing on poverty and its alleviation, with special attention to women. We appreciate the recognition these issues have also been accorded in the framework of the ongoing national policy dialogue.

Since 1990, Germany has made a total of DM 800 million in official development assistance available to Nicaragua. In 1995/1996 alone, DM 56 million in additional funding has been pledged. Germany also recognizes that the extremely high external debt burden used to be one of the most devastating legacies of Nicaragua's past and has considerably hampered the process of economic revival. I am therefore glad to note that the German-Nicaraguan agreement on a rescheduling of DM 1 billion of debts, reached during the course of last year, has contributed to the considerable reduction of pressure in this area noted in the report.

My Government is particularly pleased with the environmental protection measures against which some of above-mentioned debts have been offset, and it hopes that conscious and careful treatment of the environment will ultimately result in reduced vulnerability to natural disasters.

Finally, my delegation welcomes the draft resolution introduced under agenda item 36. As in previous years, we fully support its contents and we are more than glad to join the co-sponsors. With a view to the work of this General Assembly, we furthermore note with satisfaction the provisions contained in operative paragraphs 9 and 10, concerning biennial consideration of the agenda item and its consolidation with related matters under the agenda item entitled "Special economic assistance to individual countries or regions" from 1998 on.

Mr. Wibisono (Indonesia): Let me begin by expressing, on behalf of the Government of Indonesia, our sincere appreciation to the representative of Nicaragua for his lucid and informative statement on this item. I should also like to thank the Secretary-General for his comprehensive report (A/51/263), which clearly paints a sombre picture of the current situation in Nicaragua.

After a decade of civil strife, the Government of Nicaragua has indeed made significant progress in achieving peace and national reconciliation, which, in turn, has greatly enhanced the possibility of laying solid foundations for successful economic recovery and social development. Last Sunday we were pleased to see the democratic process being implemented through the elections for President, the Legislature, local authorities and the Central American Parliament. In this regard, Indonesia was honoured to participate in the process by sending its experts as official observers of the election upon the invitation of the Government of Nicaragua. It is therefore the hope of my delegation that these elections will mark the final consolidation of democracy and national reconciliation in Nicaragua.

Looking back over the recent past, we are very much aware that the cumulative impact of natural disasters and economic crises has combined to produce an untenable situation clearly deserving concerted international support and assistance. We therefore reaffirm General Assembly resolutions 50/85 and 50/132, which reflect the long plight of the Nicaraguan people and the urgent need for the international community to support the acceleration of economic recovery and social development.

One of the most serious problems confronting Nicaragua today is that of the excessive burden of external debt. This must be vigorously addressed and its terms renegotiated if sustainability is to be achieved. At the same time, we welcome the fact that Nicaragua is one of the countries that is eligible for the joint initiative of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) on debt, which is designed to relieve the debt burden of the poorest heavily indebted countries. Nicaragua's social and economic conditions, its natural vulnerability and its adverse debt-to-population ratio clearly underline the fragility of its economy and its inability to sustain its economic reconstruction and development.

For this reason, my delegation is convinced that further measures going beyond the terms of the Bretton Woods initiative are required to ensure that the country's external debt burden is reduced sufficiently to allow development to be revitalized. Only then, we believe, can its access to private investment be improved and the widespread poverty that has long plagued the Nicaraguan population be eradicated.

We are also pleased to note that various rehabilitation and reconstruction measures have already been embarked upon through the United Nations Development Programme and other United Nations agencies. And we support the medium- and long-term measures that are comprehensively covered in the Secretary-General's report. These, among others, are imperative if the continuity of the rehabilitation and reconstruction of Nicaragua is to be maintained and is to bear fruit.

In conclusion, Indonesia wishes to express its solidarity with the Government and the people of Nicaragua in their determined pursuit of political development and economic reconstruction. Such goals require not only collective national efforts, but also the attentive support of the international community. With this in mind, Indonesia continues its unwavering bilateral and multilateral political support for Nicaragua in its commendable attempts to achieve noble and constructive objectives.

Mr. Albín (Mexico) *(interpretation from Spanish)*: My delegation wishes first of all to thank the Secretary-General for his report on international assistance for the rehabilitation and reconstruction of Nicaragua. The report covers the progress made in Nicaragua, reflected in greater price stability and the establishment of a framework for developing a market-oriented economy. The support lent by the international community in this area has been very important.

The report also deals with the enormous efforts made by the Nicaraguan people in recent years to make progress in national reconciliation and institution-building. However, there is still much to be done. It will be necessary to redouble the efforts made so far. In keeping with the Secretariat's report, stability in Nicaragua has continued to depend on foreign assistance. The external debt remains one of the highest in the world in per capita terms, and poverty, which has been a problem for decades, continues to affect large sectors of the population. A new phase is now being initiated in which a long-term development strategy must be designed to improve the living conditions of the population. In the establishment and organization of a favourable economic and social environment, the international community is called upon to play a decisive role through the continuing interest and support required by Nicaraguans.

This Organization is a witness to the priority my country attaches to its relations with the countries of the Central American isthmus. In this context, and following a process of restructuring and organization of the various mechanisms through which Nicaragua and Mexico developed their relations, we held last year the first meeting of the binational commission for the purpose of raising the level of dialogue and of strengthening, through an integrated approach, consultation and cooperation in the various areas of our bilateral and international agendas. At that time we initiated important cooperation projects in such crucial areas as the war on poverty, strengthening education, the struggle against drug trafficking and environmental protection. These projects have been organized within the framework of the cooperation programme between Mexico and Central America, which includes more than 1,000 cooperation activities with Nicaragua. These measures include training, transfer of technological know-how, technical application services and advisory services in the solution of specific problems, such as disease control or energy supplies in some communities.

In the area of trade, the relationship between our two countries has been based on the desire for free, fair and transparent trade to give impetus to development. In recent years total trade between Mexico and Nicaragua has doubled, and the volume continues to increase, despite the adverse financial situation faced by my country in 1995. Our efforts to conclude a free-trade treaty have included almost 20 technical meetings that led to an intensive exchange of ideas and decisions. We are moving ever closer to a favourable conclusion for both countries.

All the foregoing shows the Government of Mexico's recognition of the catalytic role played by international cooperation in the process of rehabilitation and reconstruction of Nicaragua.

Mexico adds its voice again to the appeal to the international community and international organizations — in particular the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund and the Inter-American Development Bank — to continue to support the efforts to ensure the consolidation of the political, economic and

social institutions and to lay the bases for sustained economic growth and sustainable development.

In conclusion, we ask the General Assembly to renew its support to Nicaragua by adopting the draft resolution now before us by consensus.

Mr. Laclaustra (Spain) *(interpretation from Spanish)*: In speaking today on the agenda item entitled "International assistance for the rehabilitation and reconstruction of Nicaragua: aftermath of the war and natural disasters", I would like to underscore my Government's interest in that rehabilitation and reconstruction process, as well as in the international support it has been receiving.

In this connection, I wish to emphasize here the significant progress that has been made in Nicaragua in both the political and economic fields since a resolution on this item was adopted last year, at the fiftieth session of the General Assembly.

My Government has followed with great interest the electoral process that has been carried out in Nicaragua, culminating in the elections of 20 October, which enjoyed a very high voter turn out in a noteworthy climate of peace and respect.

I would also like to call attention to the positive results shown by some of the country's macroeconomic indicators, which point to a recovery of the Nicaraguan economy, and to the significant reforms that have been carried out to liberalize the economy and make it more competitive.

Both the economic and political aspects must be translated into considerable improvements in the standard of living of the Nicaraguan people, who are the object and principal beneficiaries of the process.

In recent years Spain has attached special attention to cooperation with Nicaragua, not only bilaterally but also within the framework of the European Union and the United Nations.

Spain's bilateral cooperation with Nicaragua is expressed through joint Spanish-Nicaraguan commissions. This institutional cooperation is supplemented by Spain's emergency assistance mechanisms for Nicaragua, the aim of which is to contribute to the relief of the population at times of national disasters, such as recently occurred there.

Among the cooperation programmes being considered within the framework of the European Union is a support project for Nicaragua's National Assembly, whose competences and authority have been strengthened since the constitutional reforms of 1995. This should constitute a fundamental element in the process of strengthening democracy in that country.

With respect to the United Nations, I would like to recall my country's signing of an agreement with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) at the end of 1995 to establish an $11 million trust fund to finance programmes that contribute to strengthening governance in Central America, and therefore in Nicaragua.

I also wish to recall the intensive cooperation Spain has been developing, together with other Members of the United Nations and with the representatives of UNDP in Nicaragua, within the framework of the Support Group for this country. This cooperation is of proven effectiveness. It must continue, and we are committed to continuing it.

As I indicated at the beginning of my statement, Spain attaches special importance to the electoral process in Nicaragua. My country committed itself to this process on two tracks. First, we made a commitment through the participation of a prestigious Spanish firm — with Spanish financing — entrusted with vote-counting and data processing, as the result of an agreement signed between that firm and the Supreme Electoral Council of Nicaragua.

Secondly, we made a commitment through the dispatch of election observers, who were present during the voting. Despite certain difficulties, the election took place in a climate of moderation, which we consider very positive.

The rehabilitation and reconstruction of Nicaragua is a challenge that the country should not face alone, but rather together with the entire international community. In this connection, my Government wishes to acknowledge in this forum the efforts made by the political forces, the economic actors and, most essentially, the people of Nicaragua to move forward on this track. At the same time, we welcome this item's presence again on the General Assembly's agenda as unequivocal proof of the importance the international community attaches to it.

For all these reasons, Spain urges the Secretary-General and the United Nations system to continue to lend support and assistance to Nicaragua for the consolidation of peace and democracy and for the development of the country. Spain also wishes to reiterate its support for and continued commitment to that task.

Guided by this spirit, my Government has co-sponsored draft resolution A/51/L.3, which we hope will be adopted unanimously by the General Assembly.

Mr. Meléndez-Barahona (El Salvador) *(interpretation from Spanish)*: I have the honour to participate on behalf of the Central American countries in the debate on agenda item 36, "International assistance for the rehabilitation and reconstruction of Nicaragua: aftermath of the war and natural disasters". In so doing, I wish to emphasize the importance we attach to the rehabilitation process in that brotherly country.

I first wish to point out that we fully adhere to the statement made by the Ambassador of Nicaragua, Mr. Erich Vilchez Asher.

The peoples of Central America have suffered the consequences of the structural problems that historically characterize developing countries. These problems, by their very nature and by the absence of just and equitable solutions, have been the root cause of the political, economic and social conflicts that culminated in armed conflicts in the region during the 1970s. As a result, we lost ground in the efforts to improve the standard of living of Central American societies. Those of us who experienced armed conflict were most deeply affected.

This situation in Central America was compounded by the fact that nature has not been very benign towards our peoples, whose efforts in the search for better standards of living have not infrequently met with the devastation caused by natural disasters: earthquakes, tropical storms, hurricanes, floods, volcanic eruptions and so forth. These have had tragic results, not only because of losses of human life, but also because of social and economic consequences that have compelled us to seek humanitarian relief assistance. These situations have absorbed resources that would have otherwise been devoted to economic and social development programmes.

Nicaragua is one of the Central American countries whose people have suffered most from these problems. It has deployed enormous efforts to promote peace, stability, reconciliation, reconstruction, economic recovery and social development. These efforts have enjoyed the solidarity and support of the United Nations system and of the international community. Both moral and material support have been extended, through international technical and financial aid and cooperation.

Nicaragua, together with the rest of Central America, has made great progress in overcoming difficulties. However, serious problems still remain whose causes have not been totally overcome, especially as regards those beyond man's control, such as natural disasters.

Central American countries view with satisfaction the programmes being developed in Nicaragua, with the support of the international community, to solve urgent development problems, particularly in the social field, especially as regards programmes that favour the most vulnerable sectors of society, which are the most deeply and directly affected by any crisis.

In this respect, we are grateful for the report of the Secretary-General (A/51/263) on agenda item 36. We unconditionally support the draft resolution in document A/51/L.3, which appeals to the United Nations system and to the donor community to supplement national efforts in Nicaragua to promote social and sustainable development, thus allowing it to move ahead to better conditions for the Nicaraguan people.

We reaffirm the need for Nicaragua to have access to sources of financing on favourable terms in order to provide incentives to economic recovery within the framework of the commitments and development strategy adopted in Central America. This should include a review of the country's debt-servicing burden. Support for and progress in political, economic, social and environmental well-being is also of benefit to the Central American region as a whole.

We have supported Nicaragua's attempts to turn from a country devastated by war and natural disasters to one in transition towards the consolidation of democracy and stability and the promotion of development. That support has been enshrined in commitments adopted at the Central American presidential summit meetings and in relevant resolutions of the United Nations. Central American cooperation with Nicaragua is also embodied and implemented through a variety of meetings held at the regional level.

We are confident that the draft resolution, of which we are a sponsor, will be adopted by consensus.

The Acting President: We have heard the last speaker in the debate on this item.

The Assembly will now take a decision on draft resolution A/51/L.3.

May I take it that the Assembly decides to adopt draft resolution A/51/L.3?

The draft resolution was adopted (resolution 51/8).

The Acting President: May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to conclude its consideration of agenda item 36?

It was so decided.

Programme of work

The Acting President: I should like to make an announcement concerning the programme of work of the General Assembly. I should like to inform the members that on Tuesday, 29 October, as the first item in the morning, the Assembly will take up the first report of the Credentials Committee which was issued this morning as document A/51/548. Agenda item 47, entitled "Question of equitable representation on and increase in the membership of the Security Council and related matters", will therefore be taken up as the second item.

The meeting rose at 1.15 p.m.